



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Air Quality Watch for Santa Barbara Canceled Residents Near Burned Sites Cautioned about Potential for Poor Air Quality as Cleanup Continues

SANTA BARBARA, Calif. — The Santa Barbara County Public Health Department and the Santa Barbara County Air Pollution Control District today canceled the Air Quality Watch for Southern Santa Barbara County. Air quality has improved overall, and given weather conditions the improvement is expected to continue. The agencies continue to caution homeowners and contractors to be careful when cleaning up burned building materials, and stress that residents in or near burned areas need to be especially careful to close windows and keep indoor air clean as cleanup activities continue. In addition, the ash that has been deposited may be re-suspended by vehicle traffic and wind for some time, and could produce localized areas of unhealthy particle concentrations. People with heart and lung conditions, including asthma, need to pay attention to symptoms that could be related to breathing particles, and contact health care providers if symptoms continue. The agencies will continue to monitor conditions and will issue new air quality advisories if the situation changes.

Ash Cleanup

Residents are advised to be cautious when cleaning up ash to avoid stirring up particles and especially to avoid using leaf blowers (and to ask landscaping services to avoid use of leaf blowers). Anyone with heart or lung problems should not do post-fire cleanup. **Possibly the best way to clean up ash is to use a high-quality shop/industrial vacuum outfitted with a high-efficiency particulate filter and a disposable collection filter bag.** Ash can be bagged and put into trash cans, so it will not be stirred up again into the air. Special attachments can be used to clean ash from gutters, so that it will not blow back over outdoor spaces. Attachments and disposable bags are available from most hardware stores. In addition, **gentle** sweeping of indoor and outdoor hard surfaces followed by wet mopping may be effective. A damp cloth or wet mop may be all that is needed on lightly dusted areas. When cleaning up it may be useful to spray areas lightly with water; however, it is best to divert the water to lawn or garden areas so that ash-filled water does not flow into streets, runoff systems and the creeks. Do not allow children to play in ash-filled areas, avoid skin contact with ash, wash pets, remove ash from outside toys and play equipment, and take cars to the car wash.

Asbestos from burned material

When houses burn, asbestos fibers from building materials may become airborne, creating a potentially hazardous situation. Houses built or re-built more than 20 years ago have a higher likelihood of containing asbestos fibers. Cleanup and demolition activities can make conditions worse if not done properly. Handling materials that contain asbestos can be hazardous to your health. Additional asbestos-related tips are available at www.sbcapcd.org/asbestos-fire.htm.

For more information see www.OurAir.org, and for recorded advisory updates, call 805-961-8802.

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